

PACE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Agnes Martin / Navajo Blankets

537 West 24 Street, New York
November 14 – December 21, 2018

Opening Reception:
Wednesday, November 14, 6 – 8 PM



New York—Pace Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition featuring paintings by Agnes Martin alongside wearing blankets by masterful Navajo (Diné) weavers. The first exhibition of its kind, *Agnes Martin / Navajo Blankets* premiered at Pace's gallery in Palo Alto in September, and will be on view at its gallery at 537 West 24 Street in New York from November 14 – December 21, 2018. Featuring a selection of paintings created by Martin throughout her career,

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together with exceptional Navajo handwoven textiles from the 19th century, the exhibition will illuminate parallels between these exquisitely-crafted and transcendent bodies of work.

Most of the woven works in the exhibition were created in the form of the “chief-style” blankets by Navajo women working on indigenous vertical looms in their homes. Developed beginning in the 1750s, this bold-banded style worn around the shoulders by both men and women became a popular object of trade to high-level members of other tribes, military officers, and travelers throughout the American West, Southwest, and Northern Plains. By the mid-19th century, the Navajo chief blanket was one of the most valued garments in the world. The design spectrum of chief blankets includes four inter-figured phases, defined by their increasingly elaborate banding, coloration, and placement of foreground motifs. The chief blankets in this exhibition span the full range from first through fourth phases plus unusual variants. They and several classic serapes, dresses, and mantas (shawls) represent exceptionally rare examples of each type, rivaling museum and private collections worldwide.

Beyond their value as trade items, classic Navajo textiles are celebrated for their ideal manifestations of harmony and balance as expressed in Navajo culture and philosophy. While the Navajo language has no singular term for “art,” the powerfully descriptive word “hózhó” refers to harmony and balance in both aesthetic and intrinsic forms, a state of being where the natural and the supernatural can coexist. This concept infuses Navajo blanket-weaving as well as Navajo religious origin stories. These narratives relate that *Na’ashjeii Asdzaa*, Spider Woman, taught spinning and weaving to the earliest Navajo people to contribute to their well-being. A Holy Person and key figure in the Navajo pantheon, Spider Woman is revered as the first Navajo weaver and a source of hózhó. The luminous Navajo blankets on exhibit embody a stately yet playful sense of harmony and balance, through the light and depth expressed within each broad band derived from natural sheep’s colors and through the rich red and indigo-dyed blue foreground elements that seem to float atop the atmospheric backgrounds.

While Martin took no direct inspiration from the aesthetics of Navajo weaving in her approach to painting, she spent much of her life in New Mexico, and the region’s cultural history and artistic production suffused her experience. Using a limited color palette and a geometric vocabulary, her works are inscribed with lines, grids, or simple shapes that hover over subtle grounds of color. Maximizing the strength of pure abstraction, she explored space, metaphysics, and internal emotional states throughout her practice. As exemplified by Martin’s paintings on view in the exhibition, a profound reverence for the transcendent power of balance thrives within her work. By placing these two bodies of work in dialogue with one another for the first time, the exhibition encourages the discovery of their compelling resonances and invites new appreciation for their respective emotional impact and contributions to our shared visual culture.

“We are honored to present such exquisite and powerful works of art together for the first time, and thrilled that we can share the dialogue that this exhibition will evoke with our audiences on both coasts,” said Marc Glimcher, Pace Gallery

President and CEO. “Agnes Martin has been such a fundamental artist to Pace for over 40 years, and it has been incredibly rewarding and enlightening to examine her work through a new lens. What this exhibition asserts so clearly is the idea that the meditative practice of art making has been integral to women artists throughout history, even if they weren’t always recognized as such. Here are two prime examples of how meditations on perfection and balance can inspire society at large and be impactful forces for introspection and transcendence.”

On the occasion of the bicoastal exhibition, Pace will publish the first catalogue exploring the aesthetic resonance between classic textiles of the Navajos and the work of Agnes Martin. The forthcoming catalogue will feature a conversation between art historian and writer Nancy Princenthal, author of *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art* (2015), and Ann Lane Hedlund, cultural anthropologist and an expert in Navajo weaving. Both Princenthal and Hedlund will also participate in a panel discussion hosted by Pace on the evening of Thursday, November 15. They will be joined by Melissa Cody, a fourth generation Navajo weaver and textile artist, in a conversation moderated by independent curator and writer Candice Hopkins. Also on December 11, Pace and Artifex Press will host Tiffany Bell, editor of the Agnes Martin catalogue raisonné, and David Grosz, editor in chief of Artifex Press and publisher of the catalogue, for a conversation about Martin’s practice and the research and production of the artist’s catalogue raisonné.

Agnes Martin (b. 1912, Macklin, Saskatchewan, Canada; d. 2004, Taos, New Mexico), one of the most influential painters of her generation, left an indelible mark on the history of modern and contemporary art. Growing up in western Canada, she moved between New Mexico and New York throughout her early career. For a pivotal decade starting in 1957, Martin lived and worked in Coenties Slip, a neighborhood in lower Manhattan she shared with emerging artists including Ellsworth Kelly, before returning to New Mexico in 1968. Inspired by the transcendent qualities of paintings by Mark Rothko and Ad Reinhardt, Martin considered herself to be an Abstract Expressionist. Nonetheless, her oeuvre played a critical role in heralding the advent of Minimalism, influencing, among others, Eva Hesse’s sculptural practice and Sol LeWitt’s wall drawings. Characterized by austere lines and grids superimposed upon muted grounds of color, Martin’s paintings elegantly negotiate the confines of structure and space, draftsmanship, and the metaphysical.

Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery approaches the start of its seventh decade, Pace’s mission continues to be inspired by our drive to support the world’s most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has ten locations worldwide: three galleries in New York; one in London; one in Geneva; one in Palo Alto, California; one in Beijing; two in Hong Kong; and one in Seoul. Pace will open a new flagship gallery in New York, anticipated for completion in fall 2019. In 2016, Pace joined with Futurecity to launch Future\ Pace—an international cultural partnership innovating multidisciplinary projects for art in the public realm.

Image: *Agnes Martin / Navajo Blankets*, Installation at Pace Gallery, 537 West 24th Street, New York, November 14 – December 21, 2018.
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